

Prime Minister announces £50 million investment in grassroots football pitches

The Prime Minister has announced an additional £50 million in grassroots football pitches, to boost the wave of national interest in EURO 2020 and Women's EURO 2022, and inspire the stars of the future to take up the sport.

The funding, which will be made available next year and prioritised for left-behind communities, will enable more people to access high-quality football pitches that can be used for football and other sports right across the UK. It underlines the Government's commitment to levelling up.

Speaking from the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC) in Coventry, the Prime Minister outlined the challenges that we face and opportunities we must grasp to make sure that we build back better following the pandemic.

The new £50 million investment will be targeted at left-behind communities and will address health inequalities, encouraging children and young people to get more active while ensuring more people can enjoy our national sport. It is in addition to £25 million for new community football pitches announced by the Chancellor at the Budget earlier this year.

This £50 million investment is a further step towards ensuring that everyone will be an average of 15 minutes from a high-quality football pitch.

Combined with contributions from the Football Association and Premier League as well as other local partners, this latest funding commitment will build 185 new 3G artificial pitches, improve 5,000 existing grass pitches and create 9 'hub' sites with multiple pitches.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

On the back of the inspirational success of the Three Lions and as anticipation builds for the women's Euros next year, we want to seize the moment and build the pitches for a golden decade of football. This investment will provide top facilities for the Kanes, Sterlings and Houghtons of tomorrow to hone their skills.

Playing sport is a fundamental part of building back better and healthier from covid. This extra £50 million funding will ensure that families right across the country have fantastic grassroots facilities on their doorstep. We committed to levelling up and we are delivering.

FA Chief Executive Mark Bullingham said:

Grassroots football facilities play a vital role in the heart of our communities and investment in them has never been more important.

This £50 million from the Government, as part of their £550 million election commitment, will help to change and improve lives. More quality facilities around the country will help us find and inspire the next generation of England stars.

This funding will also play an important part in helping to get people active again and improving the mental and physical health of the nation as lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Premier League Chief Executive Richard Masters said:

It is great news the Government has confirmed this investment into grassroots football pitches at a time when interest in the game is at a high following England's fantastic EURO 2020 campaign.

These funds will enhance the significant contributions the Premier League, The FA and Government make through the Football Foundation, enabling the delivery of more pitches and facilities in the communities that need them the most and helping to get even more people playing the sport.

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, many football clubs at all levels of the UK domestic game have benefited from the multi-billion-pound package of government support, including the furlough scheme and Covid loan schemes.

Last year, the government introduced the £300 million Sport Winter Survival Package to protect spectator sports in England and, at the Budget this year, a further £300 million was announced for a Sport Recovery Package to continue to support clubs as fans return to venues.

Separately, Sport England, which is funded by the government and National Lottery, has provided £220 million to support community sport clubs and exercise centres through the coronavirus pandemic. Sport England has also provided an extra £50 million to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations as part of their Uniting the Movement strategy.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- According to Sport England 40% of grassroots football clubs in England are in the top 20% most deprived communities.
- This funding will be targeted at areas in categories 1 and 2, as defined in the government's levelling up fund prospectus:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-prospectus>

Sustaining momentum towards elections in Libya

Thank you, Mr President, for convening this discussion. And I thank Special Envoy Kubiš for his briefing. I am pleased we are joined by Prime Minister Dabaiba and Foreign Minister Maas, and the Secretary General of the Arab League Aboul Gheit.

Mr President, ministers, colleagues, the UK welcomes the progress made in Libya over the last year, supported by UNSMIL and the Berlin process. However, there is still as we've heard, work ahead to complete Libya's political transition. I'd like to highlight three urgent steps today:

First, it is time to deliver on the commitment to free, fair and inclusive national elections on 24 December 2021 with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. So I urge all relevant Libyan authorities to work together, with the support of UNSMIL, to agree the legal basis for elections and ensure that they go ahead on 24 December as agreed. Members of the House of Representatives, and the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, have a particular responsibility here. The UK will not hesitate to act against those who deliberately undermine holding elections.

Second, we urge the full implementation of the October Ceasefire Agreement. This includes the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries without delay. We support efforts by the UN and Libyans to operationalise this withdrawal immediately. We also encourage the Libyan parties to press ahead with their commitment to open the coastal road, building confidence in the transition away from conflict.

Finally, we must not lose sight of the essential services that ordinary Libyans rely on – including electricity, water, education and healthcare. Delivering these means agreeing a balanced, national budget, and ensuring that resources are used for the benefit of people across Libya. It also means re-unification of Libya's institutions and rebuilding citizens' trust in government.

Mr President, thanks to the efforts and the will of Libyans, the country has made important progress in the last year. But that momentum must be sustained. The next steps in the transition are critical. Libya – and all Libyans – will continue to have the UK's full support in the process.

Thank you, Mr President.

Almost 100% of people have antibodies after second vaccine

- Over 207,337 participants took part in a home surveillance study for COVID-19 antibodies between 12 and 25 May 2021
- Almost 100% of people tested positive for antibodies 14 or more days after their second vaccine dose, highlighting the importance of getting both doses for the best possible protection as restrictions are eased
- Findings show vaccine uptake remained high in May

Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI have today published their latest antibody surveillance report showing, almost 100% of people tested positive for antibodies 14 days after their second dose of the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccine.

Over 207,337 participants tested themselves at home using a finger prick test between 12 and 25 May 2021, tracking COVID-19 antibodies across England following either natural infection or vaccination.

Following one dose of either vaccine, the proportion of people testing positive for antibodies peaked at 4-5 weeks after first dose and then started to decline before rising substantially in those who had a second dose. The findings emphasise the need for everyone to get both doses of the vaccine to receive the best chance of protection against this disease as restrictions are lifted.

Over 90% of people aged over 65 tested positive for antibodies, rising to 95% in those aged over 75 with 36% of 18-24 year olds testing positive. At the time of the report, a quarter of respondents aged 18-24 said they had received one or two jabs compared to 99% of those aged over 75.

The government's vaccination programme has ramped up significantly since this report took place. Over half of young people aged 18 to 24 in England have now received a first dose, just a few weeks after the programme was opened to this age group, and second doses have been accelerated for all over 18s by reducing the dosing interval from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. The government is on track to offer every adult a first dose of the vaccine by 19 July and has already given two doses to two thirds of all adults.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Every vaccine is another brick in our wall of protection and I'm incredibly pleased that the latest data from REACT shows almost 100% of people tested positive for antibodies after their second

dose of the vaccine.

This is a testament to the very high level of protection the vaccine provides – with 46,000 hospitalisations prevented and 30,000 lives saved.

I urge everyone to come forward for the vaccine, regardless of your race, religion or background. It could save your life and protect your loved ones, and getting the second jab will help us all return to doing the things we love.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

It is incredibly reassuring to see nearly every single person who took part in the REACT study developed detectable antibodies following two doses of the vaccine. It goes to show once again how two doses are vital for the best possible protection.

Our vaccination programme is working and is severely weakening the link between cases, hospitalisations and deaths. We are continuing to make strong progress in boosting uptake for people living in deprived areas, as well as black and minority ethnic communities by working closely with faith and local leaders.

As we lift restrictions next week, I urge anyone who has yet to be vaccinated to get both jabs to protect yourselves and your loved ones. Vaccines are safe and have so far prevented around 8 million infections, over 46,000 hospitalisations and around 30,000 deaths.

Professor Helen Ward, Professor of Public Health at Imperial College London, said:

Results of this very large study show the substantial impact of the vaccination programme on antibody positivity in adults. However, coverage of vaccines is uneven with people in some groups and areas less likely to have been vaccinated. It is concerning that people on low incomes, in deprived areas, some minority ethnic groups and in some public facing occupations such as hospitality, may remain relatively unprotected from future spread. We need to continue and intensify efforts to reach these groups with vaccination, and to ensure other protective measures are in place.

Other findings from the study show:

- prevalence of antibodies was 30% lower in men than women. This is in part due to uptake of the vaccine as 75% of women had received at least one vaccine dose compared to 70% of men. Women also showed a higher antibody positivity after a single dose of vaccine in comparison to men;
- people in most deprived areas were least likely to have had a vaccine;
- there was higher vaccine uptake in the highest income households;
- those who work in retail, hospitality, and personal care such as hairdressing were 20 – 30% less likely to have been vaccinated than other workers;
- compared to participants reporting white ethnicity, there was a 14% higher vaccine uptake in those reporting Asian ethnicity, and a 60% lower reported uptake in people reporting Black ethnicity; and
- people who had previous COVID-19 were 40% less likely to be vaccinated than those with no history of COVID-19.

Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme from Imperial's School of Public Health, said:

Antibodies play an important role in protecting against future illness, which is why our REACT programme has been tracking coronavirus antibodies in the population since early on in the pandemic. So it's very encouraging to see a greater than 4-fold increase in antibody prevalence since our last findings in January, highlighting the impact of the vaccination programme. More importantly, our findings also reinforce the need to get fully vaccinated to protect yourself and those around you.

The government is expanding its community champions scheme so that communities have trusted local leaders who can help answer questions about the vaccine and work with the NHS and public health teams to support local communities. £23 million funding has been allocated to 60 councils and voluntary groups across England to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and boost vaccine take up. Community leaders are being urged to make clear an NHS number is not needed to get a jab and that there are a large number of vaccination sites spread right across the country that people can go to. Over 98% of the UK population now lives within 10 miles of a vaccination site.

The government also accepted the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) guidance encouraging local flexibility in delivering vaccines to groups with lower uptake, including those not registered with a GP surgery. As such, local systems should have a plan in place for full coverage of all health inclusion groups, for example people not registered with a GP, people experiencing homelessness, refugees, asylum seekers, people with addictions, and people who frequently attend A&E.

It is also working with community leaders and charities to deliver pop-up vaccination sites, including at places of worship or sports grounds, to encourage vaccine uptake. Recognising that accessibility can be a factor in vaccine uptake, the NHS is also supporting the work of local vaccination services – such as a mobile facility for people who cannot leave their home – to ensure that people with either seen or unseen disabilities can access a vaccine safely and easily when it is their turn.

We are also taking steps to promote vaccine uptake among those caring for some of the most vulnerable in our society, including health and social care staff, and continue to monitor how effective these measures are.

In total, 34,997,491 million people in the UK have now received both doses of vaccine, and the government remains on track to offer a first dose to all over 18 year olds by 19 July.

Notes to editors

The report can be downloaded [here](#)

Scottish Secretary comments on July 2021 Labour Market Statistics

News story

As the latest ONS employment figures are published, Alister Jack, Secretary of State for Scotland, says the UK Government remains wholly focused on recovery.



Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

It's encouraging to see a decrease in unemployment in today's statistics, but there are still big challenges ahead of us in getting our economy back on track.

From the very start of the pandemic the UK Government took decisive action to support lives and livelihoods right across the UK. We are continuing to support more than 173,000 Scottish jobs through our furlough scheme, which will run until the end of September.

As the UK Government-funded vaccine rollout allows all parts of the UK to further ease lockdown restrictions, our focus remains wholly on recovery. The UK Government's Plan for Jobs is helping get people into work as we build back better from the pandemic.

Background points:

- The UK Government's furlough and self-employed schemes will run till the end of September 2021. At their peak, these schemes supported more than 900,000 Scottish jobs.
- More than 100,000 Scottish businesses have benefitted from £4 billion of UK Government loans.
- The UK Government has provided billions in extra funding for the welfare system for those unable to access other forms of support. This includes the £20 Universal Credit uplift which will run until the end of September 2021.
- This direct support is on top of the additional £14.5 billion provided to the Scottish Government since the start of the pandemic.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people of all ages back into work, including our £2 billion Kickstart scheme for young people, sector-based work programmes and recruitment of thousands of additional work coaches.
- The UK Government is funding the UK-wide vaccine programme, and continues to provide all Covid testing in Scotland outside of the NHS.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed unemployment in Scotland fell slightly since last quarter (-0.2%). Scotland's performance continues to be slightly stronger than the rest of the UK as a whole at 4.4% (compared to

4.8% UK rate).

The employment rate for those aged 16-64 in Scotland was 74%, a decrease of 0.4 percentage points.

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[Community Ownership Fund opens for bids from communities in Scotland](#)

People across Scotland are being given the chance to become owners of at-risk local pubs, theatres, post offices, sports grounds and corner shops thanks to the UK Government's new £150 million [Community Ownership Fund](#).

The move is part of the UK Government's strategy to build back better from the pandemic by giving communities the power to save the local institutions that bring us together and foster a sense of community.

Details have been published today (Thursday 15 July) of how voluntary and community organisations across Scotland and the rest of the UK will be able to bid for up to £250,000 matched funding to buy or take over local assets and run them.

Up to £1 million will be available to establish sports clubs or help to buy sports grounds at risk without intervention – meaning a group of loyal supporters could become the Chairman and board at their beloved local team.

A total of £12.3 million has been set aside for community projects in Scotland, whether they be sporting and leisure facilities, cinemas and theatres, music venues, museums, galleries, parks, pubs, post office buildings and shops.

The Prime Minister unveiled more detail as part of a major speech today setting out how the UK Government will continue to level up all regions of the country as we bounce back from the pandemic.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Alongside the Levelling Up, Community Renewal and UK Shared Prosperity Funds, the Community Ownership Fund is part of a crucial package of UK Government investment to support communities.

The funds will play an important role as we build back better from the pandemic. I encourage communities across Scotland to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities the Community Ownership

Fund provides.

The announcement follows major investment and action from the UK Government to level up opportunity and prosperity across all areas of the country, including through the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund and the £220 million Community Renewal Fund.

The UK Government will undertake a series of information events with communities, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and local authorities in all parts of the UK. The first bidding round closes on 13th August with another seven bidding rounds expected to take place over the next four years.